



STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING



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GOVERNOR

THOMAS D. WATKINS, JR.
SUPERINTENDENT OF
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

July 30, 2004

MEMORANDUM

TO: State Board of Education

FROM: Thomas D. Watkins, Jr., Chairman
Tom Watkins

SUBJECT: Update on SBE/MDE Strategic Plan/Aligning for Leadership

Process

There is an old saying "If you don't know where you are going—any path will take you there." The No Child Left Behind Act requires states to develop a strategic plan. Before the passage of this landmark legislation, the State Board of Education was focused on its strategic goal "Substantial and meaningful improvement in academic achievement in chronically underperforming schools." In order to make substantial progress toward meeting the Board's goal, it adopted the following strategies:

- Ensuring Excellent Educators
- Elevating Educational Leadership
- Embracing the Information Age
- Ensuring Early Childhood Literacy
- Integrating Communities and Schools

Michigan Department of Education staff developed a series of plans to address specific needs, yet we needed to consolidate and update these plans to comply with the law and, equally important, to provide us all with a clear plan and pathway to meet the academic needs of our children. In order to enhance, update, and improve Michigan's plan, the Department of Education solicited input from three key and five cross-cutting committees comprised of various stakeholders that met in 2002-03. It became clear quite early in the discussions that, because of early retirements and structural budget deficits, restructuring the agency to better align limited resources to meet monumental needs and requirements of the spirit and letter of the law was necessary. The Department reorganization was implemented in November 2003.

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As part of the internal restructuring, the Department planned for an internal review of how it provides leadership and direction to constituents. The Aligning for Leadership session with Department staff was held in January 2004. Also, during the period January – March, the Council of Chief State School Officers, along with MGT, Inc., conducted a diagnostic review of the Department's implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act and submitted a series of recommendations.

In May 2004, the State Board of Education along with selected Department staff had a planning session to explore the challenges of implementing the Board's strategic goal. All of this data, including the recommendations of the State Board of Education Task Forces, the Governor's Vision and Values sessions, and current activities have been compiled into a draft document to serve as the core for Michigan's Strategic Plan.

A draft Strategic Plan is being reviewed by Department staff and the Department's Leadership Team. Based on this input, staff is completing additional work to incorporate requirements and planned activities to assure a comprehensive draft plan is presented to the State Board of Education for your review at the September Board meeting.

Next Steps

Once staff has completed its work, the Draft Strategic Plan will be shared with the members of the State Board of Education for review, discussion, input, and eventual approval for purposes of public input. As required by the No Child Left Behind Act, the Board will collaborate with its partners and constituents to get input, work on refinements, and develop the ideas for implementing the Plan. The goal is to have the Strategic Plan completed by early 2005.

Things to Think About

- Who should do a thorough review and develop additional input? CCSSO-MGT believes it should be our direct customers (ISDs, LEAs, education organizations, universities, business groups, etc.).
- A number of Board members have suggested that we seek broad public comment on the draft plan to help ensure we include the "public" in the development of policy that impacts our schools, communities, and most importantly, our children.
- How do we get substantive input without spending a lot of time to do context building?
- What role can our customers play in assisting MDE, how might it happen?
- Is the timeline possible?
- If ISDs, universities, LEAs, and education organizations are involved in the development of the Strategic Plan will it help clarify the roles of these critical partners in helping implement the law?
- Ultimately, the State Board of Education must approve a Strategic Plan that will be our road map to the future. No one should mistake "input" for "decision making."